

State of Ohio has disappeared since President Bush took office. His answer always is more tax cuts for the wealthiest people in our society with the hope some will maybe trickle down and create jobs. That has not worked. His other answer is more trade agreements like NAFTA that shift jobs overseas.

Instead, Congress should extend unemployment benefits for the 1 million American workers whose benefits have expired, and Congress should pass the Crane-Rangel bill which gives incentives to those companies that manufacture in the United States, not continue to give big corporate tax breaks to the largest companies in the world who send jobs to China and send jobs to Mexico.

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#### SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

#### CALLING FOR RENEWAL OF ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, Sunday was Mother's Day. An awful lot of us were down here in Washington to kick off the next several months on going to so many different States to remind people that September 13, the assault weapons ban will expire. In many ways it was great seeing people I have met over the last several years, people from California, Oregon, Washington, New York, Jersey, Connecticut, people that gave up Mother's Day to come down and to be here today and tomorrow to lobby Members of Congress to remind their legislators they want the assault weapons ban kept in place. One of the saddest things was talking to so many friends that I have met over the years, those that have lost their children, their husbands, their wives, and yet they are still out there fighting.

We know that reducing gun violence in this country will always be a tough fight. But the one thing I heard constantly, Why are we letting the assault weapons ban expire? It is going to be up to the million moms across this country. I happen to think the dads and the grandfathers, the husbands and wives, should certainly be out there. We have every national police organization behind us. They do not want to see the assault weapons ban expire. Yet when the White House was asked about what they were going to do about the assault weapons ban, the answer came back, NO comment. That is a far cry from what was said during the last

campaign when President Bush said he would sign the bill if it came to his desk.

I know it is an inside Washington thing, but to get a bill on the desk, it actually has to be brought up here on the floor so we can vote on it. That is where the American people have to come into play. The American people have to start e-mailing, they have to start faxing their Representatives and say we want to keep the assault weapons ban in place. That is the only way that we can put pressure on this House to make sure it is coming up for a vote.

I happen to think that when our police officers start going to all their local legislators and their Senators, that we are going to see a change in the tide. I know we do things here at the last minute on the House floor. I accept that. But I have to tell you, when there is only 125 days left to make sure that the assault weapons ban stays in place and only 50 days before an election, I think the American people's voices should be heard.

I am a great believer in one person can make a difference. It was gratifying to see so many people from around the country down here in Washington. When you multiply that and multiply that throughout the Nation, we can make a difference. I always hear from the American people that it makes no difference what we do down in Washington, that they have no voice. I say that is wrong. Do you know how many votes pass in this House by one vote or fail by one vote? Over in the other body today, unemployment insurance failed by one vote. The assault weapons bill going back when it first passed, it passed by one vote. One vote does count. One vote means a lot.

Sixty-six percent of gun owners believe that the assault weapons ban should be renewed. Seventy-six percent of the American people believe the assault weapons ban should be kept in place. May I remind our people out there, the guns we are talking about are AK-47s, Uzis, the guns unfortunately that we see in the war every day. Do we actually want them back in our communities? Do we want them in our streets? In our schoolyards? Have we not seen enough gun violence in this country that we would want to put these weapons of mass destruction back out on the streets? I do not understand this. This is not taking away anyone's right to own a gun. Talk to hunters across the country; they do not hunt with these guns.

So what is the holdup here? They are back on their old rhetoric, saying the bill never worked. Talk to the police officers across this country and they will say the bill does work. May I remind everybody why we passed an assault weapons ban in the first place? Because too many of our police officers were being mowed down. Get out there and let your voices be heard. We can make a difference.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair reminds Members that they are not to refer to actions of the other body.

#### DROUGHT IS A NATURAL DISASTER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, as many people know, we frequently talk on the floor here about the state of the economy. However, it seems to me that much of this criticism is unfounded. We currently have historically low interest rates. Inflation is at 1.9 percent which, again, is almost at an all-time low. Economic growth is exceptional, 12 percent in the fourth quarter. Productivity increase is the highest in the last 40 years. And recently we have heard that government revenues are increasing, which means that we may have \$100 billion less deficit than was originally forecast.

The majority of the criticism seems to focus on joblessness which currently stands at 5.6 percent of American workers and is decreasing. This is certainly a figure we would like to see better, like to see it improved. But I would like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that in the decade of the 1970s the average unemployment rate was 6.2 percent; during the 1980s, it was 7.3 percent; during the 1990s it was 5.8 percent. So for that 30-year stretch from 1970 to 2000, we averaged 6.4 percent unemployment. Today it is at 5.6 percent. In April we added 280,000 payroll jobs. We have added 867,000 since January, and 1.1 million since last August.

Those who decry the overall strength of the economy would appear to be in error. My thesis is that this is the strongest economy in the world and is generally doing quite well. However, Mr. Speaker, one segment of the economy is currently very troubled. I would like to point to the graphic here which I think illustrates this. Currently the dark areas, the red, the yellow, the brown and the deep brown are areas of drought in the country. This would be bad enough if it was just this year, but this is something that has been ongoing now for 5 years. Throughout that area, those who are raising dry land crops have had practically no crop at all. The reservoirs which are used for irrigation are now down to 25, 30 percent. Many of them will run dry within a year.

I think it is important that we look at what is happening to the farm economy. This is a natural disaster. We sometimes readily provide assistance for fires, for floods, for tornadoes or hurricanes but not for drought. I guess the argument is that somehow a drought comes on slowly so it is not a natural disaster. But as far as those